

Most People with Diabetes Die of a Heart Attack or Stroke: Here's How to Beat the Odds

African Americans are at increased risk for type 2 diabetes, and two out of three people with diabetes die of a heart attack or stroke. This is serious business. But you can work to beat the odds. You can take action to help prevent heart attack and stroke.

For people with diabetes, a key to preventing heart attack and stroke is to control the ABCs of diabetes: blood glucose (“sugar”), blood pressure, and cholesterol. A is for the A1C, a test measuring average blood glucose control over three months. B is for blood pressure. C is for cholesterol.

Take control. Ask your health care provider what your ABC numbers are, what they should be, and what you can do to reach those goals. And during American Heart Month, the National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP) offers these lifestyle tips for how people with diabetes can help prevent heart attack and stroke and live a long, healthy life.

- **Get physical activity everyday.** Sports or dancing, walking or even household chores: even modest amounts of activity help you lose weight and lower your blood pressure.
- **Eat less fat and salt.** Instead of reaching for the salty fries, reach for some fruit. Add some more fiber to your diet by choosing whole grains, vegetables, and beans.
- **Stay at a healthy weight.** Being overweight or obese is a risk factor for heart attack and stroke, and losing even a small amount of weight can lower your risk.
- **Stop smoking.** Cigarette and tobacco smoke is one of the major risk factors associated with heart attack and stroke. Quit. Ask your health care provider for help.
- **Take your medicines as prescribed.** Also ask your doctor about taking aspirin..
- **Ask for help.** A little encouragement and a support go a long way. Ask your family and friends to help you stay on the right track.

The NDEP's *Be Smart About Your Heart. Control the ABCs of Diabetes* campaign offers tools to help people with diabetes and their loved ones control their diabetes and prevent heart attack and stroke. Visit NDEP online at www.ndep.nih.gov and click on the Be Smart logo for more information.